

The Pregnancy Care Assistant Kit

I will stay fit and eat right



I will commit to 40 weeks

**I will keep my baby
safe and healthy**



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and **Eat**
Right”

Vitamin Supplementation

Folic acid helps prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord. If you are pregnant and have not been taking folic acid, you may start now to help prevent this birth defect in the first three months of pregnancy. Folic acid is available in most multivitamins, folic acid supplements, and in some foods. The following foods can help you get the recommended amount of folic acid you need:

- Green leafy vegetables
- Citrus fruits
- Beans
- Breads
- Cereals
- Rice
- Pastas

Substance Abuse

Among the most challenging habits to break prior to becoming pregnant are alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs usage. Birth control should be considered to prevent pregnancy during the use of these substances. Using unclean needles for drugs can place you at risk for serious medical complications including hepatitis and HIV. It is important that women of childbearing age be checked for smoking, alcohol, and drug use and offered counseling so they can quit before getting pregnant.



Preconception Counseling and Examination

It is important to see your medical provider before getting pregnant for a complete physical exam. During this exam your provider will ask questions about your health, family history, and habits to assess your risks for problems during pregnancy. Any medical problems or infections can be identified and treated before you are pregnant.

If you are having problems getting pregnant, your doctor can refer you to a specialist. Initial blood work will also be done to identify your blood type, and to check for problems like thyroid disease and low blood count.

Your provider will also review your current immunizations (shots) and update them as needed. Three important immunizations to have updated are your chicken pox, DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis) and MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella). These shots cannot be given during pregnancy so it is important to get them before you become pregnant.

By taking the time to plan for your pregnancy you can be one step closer to having a healthy baby.



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What is prenatal care?

Prenatal care is medical attention given to the expectant mother and her developing baby. It should be initiated the moment a woman realizes she is pregnant and continues until the day the baby is delivered. The first visit is a chance for a mother and her health care provider to get to know each other.

It involves a lot of questions related to the mother's health and a complete physical examination with initial blood work. The first visit is also important to find out an estimated date when the baby will arrive (due date).

In the beginning, a mother should see her health care provider every 4 weeks until she is 28 weeks into the pregnancy; every 2 weeks until 36 weeks; and weekly until she delivers. During these visits, a provider will review any concerns or problems the mother may have and check weight, blood pressure, and baby's growth. They will also do necessary blood work as scheduled.

Why is prenatal care important?

A child's health begins long before the baby is born. Therefore, the sooner a provider knows about a problem with you or your growing baby, the better prepared they are to handle it. Committing to attending your prenatal visits will give your provider important information to discover birth defects, diabetes, infection, toxemia and many other problems that may harm you or your child. With good prenatal care you can decrease your baby's risk for health problems.

Nutrition and Dietary Restrictions

Good nutrition during pregnancy is very important for your baby to grow and develop. Despite popular belief, you do not have to eat twice as much when you are pregnant! Eating for two will make you gain too much weight, which can cause problems with diabetes, with your labor, and with losing weight after you have your baby.



A nutritionist can help you pick and choose what is best for you to eat. Although nausea and vomiting during the first few months of pregnancy can make this difficult, try to eat a well-balanced diet and take your prenatal vitamins. Here are some recommendations to keep you and your baby healthy. By eating a variety of foods daily, you will get all the nutrients your body needs.

Breads and Grains	6-11 servings
Fruits and Vegetables	2-4 servings each
Dairy sources (milk, yogurt, cheese)	4 servings
Protein sources (meat, fish, eggs)	3 servings
Fats and sweets	Limit use

Drinking water is just as important as eating a healthy balanced diet during pregnancy. Water flushes waste products from the cells and aids in liver and kidney function for both mom and the baby.

Not enough water can cause constipation, preterm labor, and miscarriage. Even slight dehydration can cause or add to fatigue. It is recommended that you drink 8-10 (8 oz) glasses of water a day. Just remember, this amount does not include the water found in sodas, teas, or fruit drinks! Drinks that contain caffeine should be very limited during a pregnancy.

Exercise and Pregnancy

Exercising during pregnancy does not increase your risk of miscarriage. If you followed a regular exercise program before your pregnancy, you should be able to continue that program, to some degree, throughout pregnancy.

Always check with your health care provider before starting a new exercise program. Following these guidelines below will ensure that your exercise routine does not negatively affect you or the health of your baby:

- Never exercise to the point of exhaustion or breathlessness. By doing this, you are limiting the amount of oxygen for both you and your baby.
- Wear comfortable shoes that give strong ankle and arch support. During pregnancy your joints are looser, and injuries are more common. Always warm up and cool down before and after exercising.
- Avoid contact sports and any sport with the potential to fall. Walking, yoga, or swimming are great alternatives and are good choices for beginners.
- During the 2nd and 3rd trimesters avoid exercises that involve lying on your back because this decreases blood flow to your womb.



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Breastfeeding

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies be breastfed for at least the first six months of life. Breastfeeding saves time and money. You do not have to purchase, measure, or mix formula. You do not have to sterilize or warm up bottles in the middle of the night; human milk straight from the breast is always sterile and just the right temperature.

A mother's milk has just the right amount of fat, sugar, water, and protein that is needed for a baby's growth and development. Most babies find it easier to digest breast milk than they do formula. Breast milk has agents (called antibodies) in it to help fight off infections and diseases. Recent studies show that babies who only breastfeed during the first six months of life are less likely to develop ear infections, diarrhea, and lung problems. They may also be less likely to be obese as a child, and are found to be smarter than formula-fed babies.

Immunizations and Well Child Visits

Immunizations (shots) are vaccines made of either weakened or “killed” versions of the bacteria or virus that causes a particular disease. These harmless versions are injected or ingested into a healthy body where the immune system produces antibodies that protect the body from these diseases in the future.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following immunizations for infants during the first year of life:



1. **DTaP**, to protect against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough)
2. **Hepatitis B (HBV)**, to protect against Hepatitis B, a virus which causes liver disease
3. **Hib**, to protect against Haemophilus influenza type B, which can cause meningitis, pneumonia, and epiglottitis

4. **Pneumococcal (PCV)**, to protect against pneumococcal diseases that can cause meningitis, pneumonia, and ear infections
5. **Polio (IPV)**, to protect against polio
6. **Rotavirus** (the only oral vaccine) to protect against rotavirus which can cause severe diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and dehydration
7. **Hepatitis A**, which protects against Hepatitis A that affects the liver, causing diarrhea
8. **MMR**, that protects against measles, mumps, and rubella (German measles)
9. **Varicella**, which protects against chicken pox
10. **Influenza**, which protects against the flu

Placing babies on their backs decreases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or “crib death.” SIDS is the sudden and unexplained death of a healthy infant under one year of age. It is the leading cause of death among infants who are between one month and one year of age.

At this time, there is no known way to prevent SIDS, but there are steps parents and caregivers can take to reduce the risk of sudden infant death. The following are five ways of keeping baby safe during sleep:

1. Keep your baby’s sleep area close to, but separate from, where you and others sleep.
2. Never share your bed with your baby while sleeping.
3. Use a crib that meets the current safety standards.
4. The crib mattress should be firm, flat, and covered with only a tight fitting crib sheet.
5. Always place baby on his/her back for nap and night time.
6. Use a wearable blanket instead of loose blankets to keep baby warm.
7. Pillows, blankets, and stuffed animals should never be used in a baby’s sleep area so remove anything that could block the free flow of fresh air.

It is important to receive these immunizations **on time**. Late shots increase an infant’s risk of infection. The following table shows when each of these shots should be given.

Sleeping Healthy

The American Academy of Pediatrics warns parents to not place their infants to sleep in adult beds, otherwise referred to as bed sharing. Infants under one year of age should always have a safe place to sleep whether taking naps, going to bed for the night, or when visiting and traveling.

FIGURE 1. Recommended immunization schedule for persons aged 0 through 6 years — United States, 2009

Vaccine ▼	Age ►	Birth	1 month	2 months	4 months	6 months	12 months	15 months	18 months	19-23 months	2-3 years	4-6 years
Hepatitis B ¹		HepB	HepB	see footnote 1		HepB						
Rotavirus ²			RV	RV	RV ²							
Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis ³			DTaP	DTaP	DTaP	see footnote 3	DTaP					DTaP
Haemophilus Influenzae type b ⁴			Hib	Hib	Hib ⁴		Hib					
Pneumococcal ⁵			PCV	PCV	PCV		PCV				PPSV	
Inactivated Poliovirus			IPV	IPV			IPV					IPV
Influenza ⁶							Influenza (Yearly)					
Measles, Mumps, Rubella ⁷							MMR		see footnote 7		MMR	
Varicella ⁸							Varicella		see footnote 8		Varicella	
Hepatitis A ⁹							HepA (2 doses)				HepA Series	
Meningococcal ¹⁰											MCV	

Range of recommended ages
Certain high-risk groups



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